

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, June 12, 1895, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. 10 rue Nitot, June 12th 1895. My dear Alec:

We feel very swell, we've our curtains up at the long last. There are two sets of them, red velvet first and Turkey red next. Then there are the silk sash curtains. As there are no awnings or blinds to our big bay window we shall doubtless be thankful for the protection from the sun these curtains will afford. So far however, we have not been in the least incommoded by the visits of the sun. Occasionally the papers refer to the great heat here but at all events it does not reach up to our hill for we have never been really hot. One day the children sported their gingham dresses, but by nightfall found them decidedly chilly.

We were to have attended the first of a course of lectures given in the house of Madame la Comtesse de Caithness and Duchesse de Pomar to which we have been invited this afternoon, but the children did not come up from their lessons to dress in time. The card came yesterday, and I could not at first imagine how such a gorgeous person became aware of our humble existence, but remembered that Madame Blanc had promised to get it for me. The lecture today was by L' Abbe Charbonnel and was entitled "Les mystiques dans la litterature d'a present." I shall hope for better success next Wednesday. I was quietly writing to Mamma yesterday in my parlor, the children being absent when I looked up and there was Mrs. Pollok and right behind her Mr. Pollok. They arrived Sunday night, were equally unable to obtain rooms in the Metropolitan and are now at the Terminus. Mamma 2 wanted me to take them some flowers and go at once to call, so I spent most of yesterday trying to find them. I succeeded at last and left my roses, but Mrs. Pollok was not in. They were in the Salon, and came here afterward. It was good to see home faces again. They said I looked very well, much improved from my appearance in Washington.

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They did not see the children, which was just as well for both were under the weather that day, Elsie with a bilious headache and Daisy still tired after our visit to the Champs de Mars Salon. Today most of my time has been spent giving the children a bath! They thought a real full length tubbing was what they most wanted so we started off hoping to get back in an hour for lunch. It took an hour and a half though, so we lost our lunch here and had to get a very poor one at a restaurant and came home almost late for one of the lessons. This afternoon, it being too late for the Duchesse's we went to see Mrs. Mauro and then poor old Mme. Hansen. She was so glad to see us poor old thing, she is poor and old and has rheumatism. She asked after Mr. McCurdy and was so grateful for some photographs he sent her some time or other. Ask him please to send her some more, she has so few pleasures now. Then having still a few spare moments we drove to Fullers for some soda-water and candy. For all I have said about wondering why people must have American things when they have left America of their own accord, it was very nice to get a taste of soda-water again, and the American cakes and candies looked most unusually tempting. The children think it very strange that although they have always associated France and Paris with candy they can't find any candy stores here and 3 have been forced to an American store for some.

It was too absurd yesterday. In the midst of plenty, plenty of money and plenty of "comestibles" Charles and I starved. The way was this — I thought he had some of my money, I knew very little but still enough, so telling him to go another table in the restaurant I sat down to order my lunch. Alas my French wasn't equal to the occasion and all I could manage was ham and eggs and beer, which I hadn't ordered! I would have liked more, but feared a fuss and I asked for my bill, and asked Charles for my money. Imagine my dismay when he confessed he hadn't enough! The cabby had taken more than he expected and there we were with our lunch eaten and no money to pay for it! I didn't know what we were to do or how to explain, imagine the situation, two strangers, no money and no language! It might have been sufficiently disagreeable, but at the last moment I suddenly remembered I had a hundred franc bill in my safety pocket. Coming

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home I found that I had not only had the bill in my pocket, but the two hundred francs in gold you gave me and which I had quite forgotten, and all the English bank-notes too. But wouldn't it have been funny if we had been marched off to the police and then searched and all my wealth discovered? What would they have thought?

The horseless carriages left the Arch of Triumph for Bordeaux yesterday, at last accounts they had reached Tours. The blazing heat the papers said had prostrated some of the spectators. Daisy was out in her jacket feeling cold!

Goodbye — perhaps the mail will bring a letter tonight.

Lovingly, Yours ever,